The Cheerful Letter

EVERY PLACE A CHURCH; EVERY DAY THE LORD'S DAY; ALL EVENTS BLESSINGS; ALL JOY THANKSGIVING; AND ALL NATURE AND LIFE FULL OF GOD.—*James Freeman Clarke.*

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THE FIRST CHRISTMAS

"AND there were shepherds in the same country abiding in the field, and keeping watch by night over their flock. And an angel of the Lord stood by them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Be not afraid; for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all the people: for there is born to you this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord. And this is the sign unto you: Ye shall find a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, and lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying,

Glory to God in the highest,
And on earth peace, good-will toward men.

"And it came to pass, when the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing that is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. And they came with haste, and found both Mary and Joseph, and the babe lying in the manger. And when they saw it, they made known concerning the saying which was spoken to them about this child. And all that heard it wondered at the things which were spoken unto them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these sayings, pondering them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, even as it was spoken unto them.—LUKE 2: 8–20.

"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to establish it, and to uphold it with justice and righteousness from henceforth even for ever."—ISA. 9: 6, 7.

A STAR AND A SONG

THOSE who visited the infant Jesus were led in different ways—by a star and by a song; and both were equally effective. The star was for the Wise Men. It would have been almost meaningless for the shepherds. The song was for the shepherds. It might have little influence with the Wise Men. Each followed his own leading, and, looking into the face of the young child, both Wise Men and shepherds were filled with adoration and a spirit of worship, and went away.

Some men come to Christ by the way of the star in these days. Appeals to them must be made, first of all, to the intellect. There are others who come simply because they listen to the song. They have no need of argument. The music from heaven satisfies the deepest longings of their souls, and under its fascination they yield to His entreaties. But let it be noted that whether one comes by the star way or by the way of the song, the last step which leads into the kingdom must be taken by faith. In this we are all alike, whether wise or ignorant, rich or poor, young or old, for by faith we receive the gift of eternal life.—*J. Wilbur Chapman, D.D.*

A CHRISTMAS SERMONETTE

It is only in sermons that texts come at the first. In life they come at the last, and as this is a story of life the text will come at the ending.

It was Christmas eve in a southern city. For hours the belated shoppers had been struggling homeward and now the stores were closed and the tired clerks followed. Through the streets were the sounds of horns blowing and the shouts of merrymaking. Everybody was smiling, everybody good natured, everyone with a kind word and pleasant greeting. All the daily animosities and worries of life were forgotten and left behind, and love, the great and only, reigned supreme. The kingdom of the world was given to the Christ child.

I was seated in the lobby of a hotel with a friend of mine. We were watching the children of some tourists play around a great Christmas tree that had been placed in the lobby. My friend, whom I had always regarded as a rather hard and silent man, was very much interested in the proceedings and his eyes followed the children in their delighted antics with what seemed to me a pathetic eagerness. The hard lines of his face were transformed into lines of gentleness. So much did he seem to be enjoying the pleasure gotten by the youngsters that I remarked, "You seem to be having a pretty good time." Immediately his face became a mask again and he said, "I once had a child of my own." Acting as though he had been caught in a misdemeanor he relapsed into a grim silence.

A little later I suggested that we take a walk and we joined the merry crowds on the sidewalk. We were jostled good naturedly and had gone a little way when we came upon a crowd collected about a patrol wagon. A couple of policemen were attempting to put into the wagon what was evidently a woman of the very lowest order, a street walker, and very drunk at that. She was struggling with the policeman and using very abusive language and the crowd, good naturedly, was cheering her on. In her struggles her hat came off and disclosed a face young in years. My friend, who had been standing a silent spectator, suddenly, much to my surprise, elbowed his way through the crowd to the wagon. "Wait a minute," he said to the policeman. "Leave the girl with me, I will take care of her." Without waiting for their permission he put his arm around her to steady her and said, "Come on with me and I will take care of you." His action sobered her to the point where she went along with him toward the hotel. Arriving there we took her to his room leaving the door open for the benefit of the house detective. She had collapsed in the elevator and he laid her on the bed as though she was a child. Then he began bathing her head and it was nothing but a miracle to see the gentleness of his hands, that a minute before had seemed so rough and clumsy. To me she seemed but a tawdy bawd but to him she was the grandest lady in the land.

We heard a knock upon the door and looking up we saw a young lady standing there. It took only a glance to see that she was very richly dressed and very pretty. She came into the room and said, "I understand that there is a sick girl here and thought that perhaps I might do something for her." Advancing to the bed she leaned over the girl. Her face contracted a minute as though in pain and I said, "I do not think that you can do any good as she is really drunk and also rather common." She turned to me with a smile of rare sweetness and paraphrased the words of the old bishop saying "Except for the grace of God it might be me." Together she and my friend, with the aiding grace of a flock of bell boys carrying ice water, began to get the girl on the bed into a semblance of soberness.

Soon she dropped off to sleep and the young lady left us with the remark that she would return later. My friend sat awhile in silence looking at the sleeping girl, his coat off and a wet towel still on his arm. Finally after a long silence he said: "Guess you think I am crazy the way I have acted tonight and I guess you are right about it—that is maybe you are right. But," and here there was a long pause, "you have never been a father. I have been. Years ago I had a wife and a baby. The wife died and left me the baby—a girl. She was everything, the sun, the moon, and the stars. I lived in San Francisco and the earthquake came. My home was destroyed; I was knocked senseless and taken to the outskirts of the city. When I came to I asked for my baby girl. The house, a stone one, had collapsed, and somewhere buried under the debris was my girl, dead. I sank into unconsciousness again and for three months I lay in a hospital between life and death. As soon as I was able, I visited my home, but the body was never found. Tonight watching those children playing around the Christmas tree brought it all back, and as I watched that girl struggling with those policemen the old thought came that had my girl lived she would be about her age and I just could not help making—well just making a fool of myself." There was a long silence. Then he said: "Do you know a child never dies? It is immortal in the minds of those that gave it being, and as they grow older it grows with them. Through the years I have watched children, every year an older one and have said to myself a thousand times my baby would be as old as that. Somehow, I am always kinder to that child—thinking while I can not do for the dead I may do for the living in her memory. You will keep it private if I tell you my gifts to institutions have been very large and always every year they are to

places where the girls are older. The money I make follow year by year the growth of the little girl I lost and somehow I know that it is right, although as you know I am not a religious man."

The girl on the bed had awakened and was looking piteously at us. We got her story. It was a short one. A desire for a larger, fuller life had taken her from her country home. For awhile she held up, but the competition of a city was beyond her powers and she went lower and lower. She was too proud even yet to quit it all because she was afraid to go back home and acknowledge defeat, penniless. While she was talking the young lady came back into the room in time to hear the last part of her story. She left with the girl and came back with her dressed in some of her own clothes and in her new apparel she looked fresh and young again. In a short time we had her folks on the phone and a little later with a bill of large denomination that my friend had forced upon her she left for a late train to spend her Christmas and stay, she said, forever with her folks.

And now you have been wondering what the Bible had to do with this story. Simply this. After the wayward girl had left, the young lady who, because of her graciousness and her bearing, I had called to myself the "Magnificent Lady," came into the room a moment. As she started to leave her elbow accidently knocked from its place on the dresser the Bible placed there by the Gideons. She stopped to pick it up and said, "The Bible is very precious to me. By its promises I feel that some day I will find my father." "Just what do you mean?" I asked. She sat a moment. "When I was a very little girl I lost my father, who thought that I was dead and went away, somewhere into the wide world." My friend spoke up. "I had a little girl but she went into a wider world. I used to call her "Bunny Mine." The "Magnificent Lady" had risen to her feet, her eyes shining like stars. "Daddykins," she cried. I saw my friend's face go deathly white, his lips quiver and then he sank on his knees before her—the rest is too holy, I could not tell it.

A little later the dawn of a Christmas day came over the city and father and daughter stood looking out of the window listening to the Christmas bells. Idly the father turned the leaves of the Bible and opening them up he read these words which stood out from the print about them. "In as much as ye have done it unto the least of these, ye have done it unto me." — *The Gideon.*

SUBLIME TO RIDICULOUS

"Have you ever laughed until you cried?"

"Yes, I did so this morning."

"How?"

"Father stepped on a tack. I laughed. He saw me. I cried."

CHRISTMAS PRAYER

Heavenly Father, we pray that Thou wilt lead us to the real spirit of the Christmas season. May we not so lose ourselves in material things as to forget the spiritual things. May we find the real satisfaction at Thy table. May we discover the springs of true merriment in Thy joy. May we seek relaxation in Thy peace. May we find the secret of Christmastide in the friendship of Christ. May we draw near to our Christmas festivities in His fellowship. May He be a guest in all our homes, the centre of every party. the inspiration of all our communion together. Save us from making our Christmas a merely carnal feast and overlooking the Lord Himself. Give to us all the spirit of little children, that we may walk with Thee in simplicity and in truth. Amen.—*John Henry Jowett, D.D.*

THE TREE AND THE CANDLE

Said the little Christmas candle
To the little Christmas tree,
"We're both of us important
But of course you must agree
I'm twice as bright as you are,
And if it weren't for me,
You'd never make a hit at all
In being a Christmas Tree!"

Said the tree then to the candle,
And his tone was most polite,
"Your gay illumination
Is particularly bright,
But allow me one small question
Which seems both fair and right—
Can you not see you're merely meant
To make me shine at night?"

The candle softly twinkled,
And then at last said she,
"I guess that I am here for you,
And you are here for me!"

—*Martha B. Thomas.*

PUT CHRIST INTO CHRISTMAS

An American writer says: "We have in our congregation a little deaf and dumb girl. On Sunday she loves to have her father or mother find for her the words we are singing, though she cannot hear the music. She looks at the hymns, glides her little finger over every line; if she does not find the name of 'Jesus' there she closes the book and will have nothing to do with it."

So should we test the religions of the day. If we find Jesus the central thought, it is good; if not, turn away and have nothing to do with it. Let us put more of Christ into our Christmas celebration, too.

THE BOOK AND MAGAZINE CLUB

Send all offers and requests for this department to Mr. Henry R. Austin, 100 Elm Ave. Wollaston, Mass.

SPECIAL NOTICES

It will greatly aid those who are sending books, magazines, cards, and so forth, if all our correspondents who send requests for the children will take pains to mention their names and ages. Lacking such information, one is likely to make mistakes; for a boy of twelve and a girl of seven are not usually interested in the same things.

When requesting books for the first time, correspondents should always give, as reference, the name and address of their clergyman.

When correspondents move to a new address, notice should be sent either to our headquarters, 16 Beacon Street, Boston, Mass., or to those persons who have been sending books and magazines.

It is necessary to state positively that the Cheerful Letter Exchange is not a "clothing bureau" and not a "charitable" society in the usual sense of the word. We do not undertake to send correspondents money, clothing or household goods. Letters asking for that sort of assistance cannot receive attention. Letters not signed cannot be printed.

Many people do care for just the kind of friendly service for which we are organized. We limit our efforts to them and their wishes.

Those who enjoy receiving books and magazines are asked to remember that they, in their turn, can give much pleasure if they will take pains to write to the persons who send such reading matter. In cases where no word of response goes back—not even to say that the books or magazines were received—senders may suppose the parcels were not welcome. Let us each do our share.

OFFERS

The Brookline (First Parish) Branch will send packages of old Christmas cards to anyone desiring them. Address Miss M. W. Suter, 116 Warren Street, Brookline, Mass.

Quilt scraps will be sent to anyone who will pay the postage. Address: Mrs. W. B. Nichols, 25 Fairmount Way, Quincy, Mass.

REQUESTS

1. We are located in the mountains of East Tennessee. If you were ever in the mountains you know the kind of people living there. They need so much along the educational line, and it is very hard to get them out of their mountain ways. It takes continued work, then it seems we accomplish but little. If no one tried to help to educate them, they would, I believe, drop back into the darkest barbarism. We need nice story books, histories, literature, classics and any books suitable for all primary and high school grades. We will appreciate any nice second-hand books you can donate for our high school library. We would appreciate a few appropriate pictures for the library and schoolrooms. The walls of a schoolroom looks so bare without pictures. If we can get children to read good books, they rarely ever go astray. Reading of good books lessens the number and kind of our criminals, and gives us a better citizenship. I believe if we could put good books in every child's hand and get him to read them, we would not need jails, penitentiaries, nor courthouses. We need an Encyclopedia for our Library. Our state high school regulations require all high schools to have one. Thanking you for any favor you can show our high school library. Dr. A. K. Shelton, Shelton Clinic, Oliver Springs, Tenn.

2. Will you please see that I again have some books for the long lonely winter. I do appreciate all your kindness in the past for without reading am so lonely. Old books such as *No Friend Like a Sister, Angel of Forgiveness* by Rosa Carey, also *Robert Ord's Atonement* by Rosa Carey. I am fond of these old stories. I do not care how old the book so it is readable. Am also fond of a western ranch story. Mrs. M. Bates, 1400 Des Moines St., Des Moines, Iowa.

3. Mrs. Cora A. Hoskinson, 936 North Union St., Decatur, Ill., is anxious to receive some late books, or *Good Housekeeping*.

4. Mrs. Hazle Watson, Copeland, Ark., is grateful for past favors and is asking for magazines or papers for the coming long winter, also cards and crochet cotton for the children.

5. Mrs. Lina Easbridge, Clifton, N. C., writes to thank the friends who have remembered her and asks for quilt pieces. She is an invalid with a crippled daughter, can do no work except to piece quilts.

6. Mrs. E. D. Tyson, Ansonville, N. C., sends thanks and asks for cards and scraps.

7. Miss Rosa Jones, Bassett, Va., would like a Bible and the *Trail of the Lonesome Pine*.

8. Will someone send me *Cupid's Diary* and *True Story Magazine?* Also would be glad to receive any magazines, books or pictures suitable for three small girls from eight to fifteen years. A book of short stories and child's Bible stories would be especially welcome, also would like a recitation book. Will return favor in any way possible. Pearl Reynolds, Appleton, Ark.

9. I am a young wife twenty-four years old and have a little boy twenty-one months old. My husband having the misfortune to have to give up his work and go to the hospital for an operation, is getting along fine but not able to go to work yet. I would appreciate some good story books, magazines, quilt scraps and the *Cheerful Letter*. Also would like to have a correspondent. They would be much enjoyed by us both as we can't get out much. Mrs. D. L. Crook, Denton, N. C.

10. Mrs. A. P. Boyd, 302 Kimball Ave., N. E. Roanoke, Va., living in a new place finds it lonely with her children in school, and asks for good reading for herself, and her thirteen-year-old boy in the high school.

11. *Ladies' Home Journal* and *Good Housekeeping* are especially wanted by Mrs. B. J. Hall, Bassett, Va.

12. Mrs. Claudia Pharis, Sandy Ridge, N. C., would be glad to receive religious reading and a Bible.

13. I hope friends will remember me and my children this winter and on Christmas. I have four children, 7 to 16 years. I would be glad of a small Bible with large print for myself. May God bless the good works of the *Cheerful Letter* which has brought cheer to so many and especially myself, who have been in poor health a long time. I hope to be remembered by many of you good friends. Best wishes to my *Cheerful Letter* friends. Mrs. C. J. Nolen, Elamsville, Va.

14. Dear *Cheerful Letter* friends: I wish to thank every one who has remembered me in any way. I have been sick all the summer. The doctor has been tending on me ever since May and I have had such a hard time getting through the summer; this has been the driest and hottest year I ever saw. The vegetables dried up and crops are no good, and we can only look forward to a hard winter. I hope the dear *Cheerful Letter* friends will remember me with good books for myself and little 13-year-old girl. I would especially like books written by L. M. Montgomery for her, and I would like any good book, and I would like magazines with lots of fancy work, and some designs for turfing, as I try to make my living selling such things and it is a hard sale just now while times are so hard. Would thank any one who could suggest something that I could make, something that would be useful to the people, and I would be very glad of scraps for patch-work, thread for crocheting, or cross-stitch, embroidery. My strength will permit me to do only real light work. Now may the Heavenly Father bless every one who has help to bring cheer and sunshine to my life of pain and sorrow, is the prayer of a sister in Christ Jesus. Mrs. Beulah Moore, Route 1, Lawsonville, N. C.

15. I have not rec'd any cheer from my dear friends for a long while and since the death of my husband I feel very lonely. I should be very glad if the friends would send me some quilt scraps. I feel that it would occupy my mind and lessen my worries. I should be glad of any kind of cheer you can send. I thank all who have sent things in the past and still hope to be remembered. Mrs. E. L. Wood, Pera, Va.

16. I want to write a few words to the *Cheerful Letter*. I want to tell some of my pen friends where I have got to. I have moved here from Albemarle, N. C., R. 3. I have lost their addresses and can't write. I would like for this to go in the *Cheerful Letter* so I can hear from them again. Bessie Earnhardt, Central Falls, N. C.

17. I will be closely confined at home this winter. My sister is living with me and she is delicate, cannot go out in the winter, and we shall be so lonely. I am writing for reading matter of a religious nature and a correspondent, and for my sister quilt scraps for she dearly likes to piece quilts. Mrs. Mildred Alley, Germanton, N. C.

18. Mrs. Lessie B. Rea and her daughter Christine of Spencer, Va., write gratefully of favors received and ask for cards for Christine's birthday on December 15th, and scraps for Mother who is a lonely woman.

19. I wish to thank the kind friends who have sent me so much nice reading and patchwork pieces, and I hope the kind friends won't forget me and my little children this cold winter. Please print this for me as we are very poor and can't answer all. Mrs. Baxter Neaves, Jefferson, N. C.

20. I am all alone with four little children, the oldest just seven years old. Will some one please send me some reading for myself, and cards and pictures for the children. Mrs. Dewey Camden, Madison Heights, R. F. D., Va.

21. Mrs. Henry Nelson, Critz, Va., R. 1, Box 54, sends thanks for past favors and would be glad of Christmas cards and a calendar. Will the friend who is sending the *Good Housekeeping* please note that the Box is 54, not 26.

Change of Address

Bessie Earnhardt from Albemarle to Central Falls, N. C.

Mrs. Baxter Neaves from Crumpler to Jefferson, N. C.

Mrs. B. J. Hall from Dodson to Bassett, Va.

Mrs. Mary E. Shelton to Lawsonville, R. 1, N. C.

Special Notice

The Home Study committee have experienced teachers, who are willing to take pupils in English either grade or advanced work. This includes grammar, rhetoric, composition or literature. Address Mrs. George O. Sands, 266 Brimble Ave., Beverly, Mass.

CHRISTMAS CAROL

The earth has grown old with its burden of care,
But at Christmas it always is young.
The heart of the jewel burns lustrous and fair,
And its soul full of music breaks forth on the air,
When the song of the angels is sung.

It is coming, old earth, it is coming tonight!
On the snowflakes which cover thy sod.
The feet of the Christ-child fall gentle and white,
And the voice of the Christ-child tells out with delight
That mankind are the children of God.

On the sad and the lonely, the wretched and poor,
The voice of the Christ-child shall fall,
And to every blind wanderer open the door
Of a hope that he dared not dream of before,
With a sunshine of welcome for all.

The feet of the humblest may walk in the field
Where the feet of the Holiest have trod.
This, this is the marvel to mortals revealed
When the silvery trumpets of Christmas have pealed,
That mankind are the children of God.

—*Bishop Brooks.*

A PERJURED SANTA CLAUS

Michael Dwyer and his friend, Patrick Brennan, were having a heated discussion. Mike, the incredulous, was challenging his chum's veracity.

"You're crazy, you're crazy, I tell you. Nobody gives yer nothin' for nothin'."

"But ain't I tellin' yer that *he* does?" Patsy retorted. "Ain't I tellin' yer what he give me last year? A fire-engine, a prayer-book and a bag o' candy." He counted them solemnly off on his fingers in emphasis.

But Mike still doubted.

"An' yer ain't paid nothin' for 'em?"

"Not a cent."

"Ain't nobody come 'round to collect on 'em?"

"Not a one."

"Have yer got 'em now?"

Patsy hesitated a moment. "Well," he said slowly, "I ain't got all of 'em, but I've got three wheels and one of the horses. The rest busted when it fell off the fire-escape. An' me mother's got the prayer-book."

"There wasn't any sense to them things, anyway," Mike argued.

"They was too: they was what I wanted."

"How did the old guy know what yer wanted?" questioned the sceptical Mike.

"Didn't I write him? I wrote it on a piece of paper, and I pinned it to the shelf over the stove, and he come down the chimney and got it."

This was too much for Michael Dwyer. "Down the chimney!" he shouted. "That's the craziest yet. If yer don't look out, yer'll get put in the funny-wagon."

"Christmas is next week," Patsy answered. "What do yer bet I don't get an express wagon and cap-pistol? Teacher tells us all about Santa Claus at school, an' we know songs about him, an' poetry pieces. I tell yer what, Mike. You come to school just one day an' Teacher'll learn yer about him."

"Aw, I ain't got no time to go to school. I've got my business to tend to, an' I guess maybe I'd better tend to it now. But say, that's a good one about the old gent comin' down the chimney. So long!"

But that evening Michael appealed to his mother for information,—his mother whom he adored. He and she had suffered many sorrows in common, but they were chums and partners ever. Mr. Dwyer for years had devoted the most of his time to drink and was seldom seen in the home which he had laid desolate.

"Say, Maw," began Mike. "Did youse ever hear of a gent what goes 'round in sort of fancy fixin's an' gives kids things for nothin'?"

"Yes, dear, Santa Claus."

Mike nodded. "That's the name Patsy Brennan called him, but I thought he was guyin' me. I never heard of him. Don't he come 'round here?"

"Not lately, dear." Her voice fell a bit. "But when you were little he brought you a rocking-horse and a fire-engine."

"That's him!" Mike was excited now. "Say, Maw, what ever happened to them things? Did I bust 'em?"

"No—no, Mike, you didn't. They—they just went." It was a familiar explanation in that house, but his mother never made it easily.

"Well, Patsy was talkin' about it today. He says he got a fire-engine, some candy and a

prayer-book. Do you think it's on the level?"

"Of course it's true. Why, when I was your age he used to bring me the loveliest things and they always seemed to be exactly what I wanted."

"But Patsy writes and tells him what to bring," her son told her. "He gits what he wants every time. I wonder what I'd better write for! I guess I can git somethin' off'n him, all right."

The very next day Mike came upon Santa Claus standing at the corner of two busy streets. He was guarding a three-legged pot into which the prosperous cast pennies and dimes to aid the Salvation Army in supplying a Christmas dinner for hundreds who must otherwise go without. Mike seized his courage and a propitious moment to remark:

"You don't git 'round to *all* the houses *every* year, do yer?"

"Well, no."

"Say, you've skipped me quite a while. I was wonderin' if yer was plannin' to take in our house this year."

"Sure. What do you want?"

Mike was all ready with his order. "Well, I'd like a lady's hat, an' some real good tea, an' I'd like a good warm shawl. Can I have all that?"

"Sure," Santa Claus agreed, "anything you say, my boy. You're the doctor."

"Then I'd like enough dress goods for a lady—a small lady. I'd like it red with black spots on it. Can I have that?"

"Oh, I guess so. I owe you something for back years, don't I?"

"I might let you have a *little* money on the goods," Mike said thoughtfully. "Not an awful lot, but if fifteen cents would help you any, I'll let yer have it. I'll put it with the list on the mantel-piece tonight, an' you come down an' get 'em. Say, a kid told me yer come down chimneys. Is that right?"

"That's how I come, *when* I come!"

That evening, after an hour of intense exertion, Michael evolved a list, laid it upside down upon the mantel-piece, weighted it down with three five-cent pieces, cautioned his mother against disturbing it, and vanished into his sleeping closet.

Mrs. Dwyer bent over the pathetic little scrawl and scanned it tearfully. And even as she read the list of feminine fancies and knew them designed for her, the heavy step she dreaded sounded on the stairs and Mr. Dwyer lurched in. He made his shivering way to the stove and laid his head upon the mantel-piece. There, under his eyes, lay three nickels on a dingy piece of paper; three nickels, meaning much stimulant and unlimited free lunch. Gloatingly he wrapped the coins up in the paper, pocketed them, and straightway left the house again.

In the gray dawn of Christmas morning, Mike was astir, and there upon the mantel-piece he found—not the red and black spotted dress, not the shawl, not the hat,—but instead an Ascot tie of a most compelling yellow. The satin atrocity represented to his mother many an act of self-denial, many an hour of work and even of hunger.

"Maw, look at that!" Mike cried. "He's got me good money, an' I've got his dirty truck. I ain't goin' to stand for no such deal. You just wait till tomorrow mornin' an' there'll be somethin' doin'."

True to his threat, on the following morning Mike approached the court-house and demanded an audience with the judge who had always taken a kindly interest in his small fortunes.

Michael's charge was explicit:

"A swell guy wid white whiskers done me dirt. He took me order for goods, he took me coin an' he delivered this here necktie."

"A very fine necktie," said the judge with a friendly smile. "It seems warm and ought to be becoming."

"It ain't what I ordered, and it ain't what I wanted," asserted Mike.

"What was your order?"

The lad rattled it off. "A lady's hat, some good tea, a lady's shawl, an' black and red dress goods for a lady's dress—a small lady."

"How large a deposit did you make with this invoice?"

"I left fifteen cents for him wid the order, an' he come an' got it."

"And you don't regard the yellow satin necktie worth that amount?" queried the judge.

"It ain't worth nothin' at all cause I don't want it. I want the things I ordered or I want me money back; an' I want yer to arrest that foxy gran'pa an' make him act on the level."

"For whom shall I issue the warrant? What is the name of the accused?"

"Sandy Claws. That's his name." Mike's voice trembled with indignation. "An' Mr. Sandy Claws is a crook for fair."

The judge addressed Mr. Crothers, one of the lawyers.

"May I ask you to attend to this case? The clerk will hand you a copy of the original invoice, and until we locate the accused the expenses will be defrayed by the Court."

Mr. Crothers was ruefully examining the list when a lady stepped forward and asked for permission to address the Court. She laid a card before the judge. Its effect upon both Mr. Crothers and the Clerk of the Court was remarkable.

"I am, as you see, the representative of Mr. Santa Claus."

The judge bowed respectfully. "I have often heard of you, madam, in that connection," he said gravely.

"We were obliged to take on a number of new packers for the holiday rush this season and we regret that several mistakes of this sort occurred. The gentleman who ordered this necktie called at the warehouse early this morning and reported that some ladies' furnishings had been left at his apartment. It is altogether regrettable, as the gentleman had planned to wear these goods at his wedding yesterday, and in consequence of their non-delivery was obliged to retain his overcoat throughout the ceremony. He was very indignant and Mr. Santa Claus was greatly distressed. If this customer will withdraw his complaint, and if the Court will grant me the custody of the goods now in his possession, I shall see that the mistake is rectified."

"Do you agree to this proposition, Michael?" asked the judge.

"Naw, I don't. An', yer Honor, don't yer let her bunco yer like the old gent done me. He fooled me out of fifteen cents, but the old lady don't get nothin'. If they think such an awful lot about the gent's yellow tie, why don't they bring me me mudder's hat, an' shawl, an' tea, an' dress-goods? I'll trade quick enough."

The judge nodded agreement. "I should suggest that this plan be adopted. I will set over this hearing for two hours and I direct that both the plaintiff and the representative for the defendant shall then appear before me. Next!"

At the end of the two hours the lady reappeared, followed by Mr. Crothers, laden with bundles.

The judge reopened the case by ordering that the bundles should be undone and their contents compared with the list and submitted to Mike. They were all perfectly satisfactory, and Mike, much puzzled, released the yellow necktie and gathered up his treasures. The lady was the first to leave the court-room. Mike paused for a last word with his friend.

"Yer Honor," he said, "do you think the old gent tried to work a con game on me? It don't seem to me like all this song an' dance about mistakes was on the level."

"Oh, I think so, Michael. I have heard of Mr. Santa Claus for a number of years and I never knew him to get into trouble before."

"Well, maybe you're right," the boy assented reluctantly, "but the thing looks funny to me. It seems as if the lady was in the game with the old gent. Perhaps she's his wife, yer can't tell, an' she got scared that you an' me would pinch their joint. It's good I come to see yer. An' say, yer seen me mudder once, didn't yer? Well, she wa'n't feelin' jest right that day, but jest the first time I can git an hour off, I'll git her to dress up in these here fixin's an' I'll bring her 'round an' let yer see how she *can* look. She sure is a daisy!"

Once more the judge smiled at his small friend. "Do, Michael," he said. "I shall be honored. Next!"

AT CHRISTMAS TIME

GIVE Christ His place at Christmas time,
In Bible story, song and rhyme.
Sound forth the Christ child's praise.
Tell of His birth, the eastern star
That brought the wise men from afar
To worship at His feet.

How shepherds saw a dazzling sight,
And heard the heavenly choir at night
Sing glorifying lays.
Oh, wondrous night, oh wondrous birth,
When God's Son, Jesus, came to earth
Death's power to defeat!

If you would know and really show
The Christmas spirit to all men,
To worship at His cradle go.
Give Christ His place, His name confess,
And from His wealth that you possess
Shall streams of blessing flow.

—*Harmon Ford.*

WHERE IT TAKES TWO

AN Englishman was showing an American round his estate and, coming to a giant tree proudly said:

"Well, Sam, what do you think of that tree? It will take some beating even in America."

"Rubbish; in America the trees are so tall that it takes two men to look to the top of them. One looks upward till he gets tired, then the other commences where the first left off."

CHRISTMAS MESSAGES FROM THE POETS

THE time draws near the birth of Christ;
The moon is hid; the night is still;
The Christmas bells from hill to hill
Answer each other in the mist.

—*Tennyson.*

Like circles widening round
Upon a clear, blue river,
Orb after orb, the woundrous sound
Is echoed on forever;
Glory to God on high, on earth be peace
And love towards men of love.

—*Keble.*

THE STORY OF THE OTHER WISE MAN

You know the story of the Three Wise Men of the East, and how they traveled from far away to offer their gifts at the manger-cradle in Bethlehem. But have you ever heard the story of the Other Wise Man, who also saw the star in its rising, and set out to follow it, yet did not arrive with his brethren in the presence of the young child Jesus? Of the great desire of this fourth pilgrim, and how it was denied, yet accomplished in the denial; of his many wanderings and the probations of his soul; of the long way of his seeking and the strange way of his finding the One whom he sought—I would tell the tale as I have heard fragments of it in the Hall of Dreams, in the Palace of the Heart of Man.

In the days when Augustus Cæsar was master of many kings and Herod reigned in Jerusalem, there lived in the city of Ecbatana, among the mountains of Persia, a certain man named Artaban. His house stood close to the outermost wall, and around it spread a fair garden, watered by streams from the slopes of Mount Orontes, and made musical by innumerable birds.

On one night in late September Artaban called together nine of his friends among the Parthian nobles, who, like himself, were among the followers of Zoroaster. Taking their places around a small black altar at one end of the upper chamber, where a tiny flame was burning, they joined with Artaban in the ancient chant of the Yasna:

> We worship the Spirit Divine,
> all wisdom and goodness possessing,
> Surrounded by Holy Immortals,
> the givers of bounty and blessing;
> We joy in the work of His hands,
> His truth and His power confessing.
>
> We praise all the things that are pure,
> for these are His only Creation,
> The thoughts that are true, and the words
> and the deeds that have won approbation;
> These are supported by Him,
> and for these we make adoration.
>
> Shine on our gardens and fields,
> shine on our working and weaving;
> Shine on the whole race of man,
> believing and unbelieving,
> Shine on us now through the night,
> shine on us now in Thy might,
> The flame of our holy love
> and the song of our worship receiving.

When the song was ended, Artaban spoke:

"You have come tonight at my call, to renew your worship and rekindle your faith in the God of Purity, even as this fire has been rekindled on the altar. We worship not the fire, but Him of whom it is the chosen symbol, because it is the purest of all created things. It speaks to us of one who is Light and Truth.

"Hear me, then, while I tell you of the new light and truth that have come to me through the most ancient of all signs. . . . The highest of all learning is the knowledge of the stars. To trace their course is to untangle the threads of the mystery of life from the beginning to the end."

"The stars," answered Tigranes, "are the thoughts of the eternal. They are numberless. But the thoughts of man can be counted, like the years of his life. We keep men always looking and waiting for a new sunrise. But we ourselves understand that the darkness is equal to the light, and that the conflict between them will never be ended."

But this did not satisfy Artaban, who, after reminding them that their own books foretold the coming of the brightness of a new light, brought forth from his tunic two small rolls of fine parchment, upon which had been written an ancient prophecy from a wise man of Chaldea in years that were long past.

"My father," said he, "I have kept this prophecy in the secret place of my soul. Religion without a great hope would be like an altar without a living fire. And now the flame has burned more brightly, and by the light of it I have read other words which also have come from the fountain of Truth, and speak yet more clearly of the rising of the Victorious One in his brightness. Hear the words of the prophecy: 'There shall come a star out of Jacob, and a sceptre shall arise out of Israel.'"

And when they spoke with contempt of the captive nation of Israel, whose tribes had been scattered, until only a remnant dwelt under the power of Rome in Judea, Artaban spoke to them of the mighty Hebrew prophet Daniel, honored and beloved of their own great King Cyrus, a prophet of sure things and a reader of the thoughts of the Eternal. And he read to them the words that Daniel had written:

> "Know, therefore, and understand that from the going forth of the commandment to restore Jerusalem, unto the Anointed One, the Prince, the time shall be seven and threescore and two weeks."

And when they still doubted and questioned he told them of his three companions among the Magi, Caspar, Melchior and Balthazar; of the signs they had seen in the sky, and the appearance of a great new star. If the star should shine again they would go together to Jerusalem, to see and worship the promised one who should be born King of Israel. He had made ready for the journey: he had sold his possessions and

bought three jewels—a sapphire, a ruby and a pearl—to carry as tribute to the King. And he asked them to go with him on the pilgrimage, that they might have joy together in finding the Prince who was worthy to be served.

But his friends did not share in his beliefs or enthusiasm. One by one they made excuses and left the home of their friend. Only Abgarus, the oldest, who loved him best lingered and said gravely: "My son, it may be that the light of truth is in this sign that has appeared in the skies, and then it will surely lead to the Prince. Or it may be that it is only a shadow of light. But it is better to follow even the shadow of the best than to remain content with the worst. And those who would see wonderful things must often be ready to travel alone. I am too old for this journey, but my heart shall be a companion of thy pilgrimage day and night, and I shall know the end of thy quest. Go in peace."

So just at daybreak, Artaban set forth alone on his long journey. On the western horizon the sky was clear. Jupiter and Saturn rolled together like drops of lambent flame about to blend in one. Then, as he watched, a steel-blue spark was born out of the darkness beneath, rounding itself with purple splendors to a crimson sphere, and spiring upward through rays of saffron and orange into a point of white radiance. Tiny and infinitely remote, yet perfect in every part, it pulsated in the enormous vault as if the three jewels in the Magian's girdle had mingled and been transformed into a living heart of light.

He bowed his head. "It is the sign," he said. "The King is coming and I will go to meet Him."

* * * * *

Before the birds had fully roused to their strong, high, joyful chant of morning song, before the mist had begun to lift lazily from the plain, the Other Wise Man was in the saddle, riding swiftly along the high-road, which skirted the base of Mount Orontes, westward. He must indeed ride wisely and well if he would keep the appointed hour with the other Magi, for the route was a hundred and fifty parsangs, and fifteen was the utmost that he could travel in a day.

Over many a cold and desolate pass, crawling painfully across the wind-swept shoulders of the hills; down many a black mountain-gorge, where the river roared and raced before him like a savage guide; across many a smiling vale, with terraces of yellow limestone full of vines and fruit-trees; over the broad rice-fields, where the autumnal vapors spread their deathly mists; and out upon the flat plain, where the road ran straight as an arrow through the stubble-fields and parched meadows; across the swirling floods of Tigris and the many channels of Euphrates, flowing yellow through the corn lands—Artaban pressed onward until he arrived, at night-fall on the tenth day, beneath the shattered walls of populous Babylon.

He would gladly have turned into the city to find rest and refreshment for himself and for his horse. But he knew that it was three hours' journey yet to the Temple of the Seven Spheres, and he must reach the place by midnight if he would find his comrades waiting. So he did not halt but rode steadily across the stubble-fields.

Near the farther end of the darkness of a grove of date-palms his horse began to pick her way more carefully. She felt her steps before her delicately, carrying her head low. At last she gave a quick breath of anxiety and dismay, and stood stock-still, quivering in every muscle, before a dark object in the shadow of the last palm-tree.

Artaban dismounted. The dim starlight revealed the form of a man lying across the road. His humble dress and the outline of his haggard face showed that he was probably one of the Hebrews who still dwelt in great numbers around the city. His pallid skin bore the mark of the deadly fever which ravaged the marsh-lands in autumn. The chill of death was in his lean hand.

Artaban turned away with a thought of pity, leaving the body to that strange burial which the Magians deemed most fitting—the funeral of the desert. But, as he turned, a long, faint, ghostly sigh came from the man's lips. The bony fingers gripped the hem of the Magian's robe and held him fast.

Artaban's heart leaped to his throat with a dumb resentment at the importunity of this blind delay. How could he stay here in the darkness to minister to a dying stranger? If he lingered but for an hour he could hardly reach Borsippa at the appointed time. His companions would think he had given up the journey. They would go without him. He would lose his quest.

Should he risk the great reward of his faith for the sake of a single deed of charity? Should he turn aside, if only for a moment, from the following of the star, to give a cup of cold water to a poor, perishing Hebrew?

"God of truth and purity," he prayed, "direct me in the holy path, the way of wisdom which Thou only knowest."

Then he turned back to the sick man. Loosening the grasp of his hand, he carried him to a little mound at the foot of the palm-tree. Hour after hour he labored as only a skilful healer of disease can do. At last the man's strength returned; he sat up and looked about him.

"Who art thou?" he said in the rude dialect of the country.

"I am Artaban the Magian, and I am going to Jerusalem in search of one who is to be born

King of the Jews, a great Prince and Deliverer of all men. I dare not delay any longer upon my journey, for the caravan that has waited for me may depart without me. But see, here is all that I have left of bread and wine, and here is a potion of healing herbs."

The Jew raised his trembling hand solemnly to heaven.

"Now may the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob bless and prosper the journey of the merciful, and bring him in peace to his desired haven. Stay! I have nothing to give thee in return—only this: I can tell thee where the Messiah must be sought. For our prophets have said that he should be born not in Jerusalem, but in Bethlehem of Judah. May the Lord bring thee in safety to that place, because thou hast had pity upon the sick."

The first beam of the rising sun sent a long shadow before him as Artaban reached the Temple of the Seven Spheres. There was no sign of the caravan of the Wise Men, far or near. Under a little cairn of broken bricks he found a piece of papyrus. He caught it up and read: "We have waited past the midnight, and can delay no longer. We go to find the King. Follow us across the desert."

"How can I cross the desert?" Artaban cried in despair. "I must return to Babylon, sell my sapphire, and buy a train of camels and provision for the journey. Only God the merciful knows whether I shall lose the sight of the King because I tarried to show mercy." — *Adapted from the story by Henry Van Dyke.*

(*To be concluded*)

I heard the bells on Christmas Day
Their old, familiar carols play,
And wild and sweet
The words repeat
Of peace on earth, good-will to men.

—*Longfellow.*

RECOLLECTIONS OF MY CHRISTMAS TREE

I HAVE been looking on, this evening, at a merry company of children assembled round that pretty German toy, a Christmas tree.

Being now at home again, and alone, the only person in the house awake, my thoughts are drawn back, by a fascination which I do not care to resist, to my own childhood. Straight in the middle of the room, cramped in the freedom of its growth by no encircling walls or soon-reached ceiling, a shadowy tree arises; and, looking up into the dreamy brightness of its top,—for I observe in this tree the singular property that it appears to grow downward towards the earth,—I look into my youngest Christmas recollections.

All toys at first I find. But upon the branches of the tree lower down, how thick the books begin to hang! Thin books, in themselves, at first, but many of them, with deliciously smooth covers of bright red or green. What fat black letters to begin with!

"A was an archer, and shot at a frog." Of course he was. He was an apple-pie also, and there he is! He was a good many things in his time, was A, and so were most of his friends, except X, who had so little versatility that I never knew him to get beyond Xerxes or Xantippe: like Y, who was always confined to a yacht or a yew-tree; and Z, condemned forever to be a zebra or a zany.

But now the very tree itself changes, and becomes a bean-stalk,—the marvelous bean-stalk by which Jack climbed up to the giant's house. Jack—how noble, with his sword of sharpness and his shoes of swiftness!

Good for Christmas-time is the ruddy color of the cloak in which the tree making a forest of itself for her to trip through with her basket, Little Red Riding-Hood comes to me one Christmas eve, to give me information of the cruelty and treachery of that dissembling wolf who ate her grandmother, without making any impression on his appetite, and then ate her, after making that ferocious joke about his teeth. She was my first love. I felt that if I could have married Little Red Riding-Hood I should have known perfect bliss. But it was not to be, and there was nothing for it but to look out the wolf in the Noah's Ark there, and put him late in the procession, on the table, as a monster who was to be degraded.

Oh, the wonderful Noah's Ark! It was not found seaworthy when put in a washing-tub, and the animals were crammed in at the roof, and needed to have their legs well shaken down before they could be got in even there; and then ten to one but they began to tumble out at the door, which was but imperfectly fastened with a wire latch; but what was that against it?

Consider the noble fly, a size or two smaller than the elephant; the lady-bird, the butterfly,—all triumphs of art! consider the goose, whose feet were so small, and whose balance was so indifferent that he usually tumbled forward and knocked down all the animal creation! consider Noah and his family, like idiotic tobacco-stoppers; and how the leopard stuck to warm little fingers; and how the tails of the larger animals used gradually to resolve themselves into frayed bits of string.

Hush! Again a forest and somebody up in a tree,—not Robin Hood, not Valentine, not the Yellow Dwarf,—I have passed him and all Mother Bunch's wonders without mention,—but an Eastern King with a glittering scimitar and turban. It is the setting in of the bright Arabian Nights.

Oh, now all common things become uncommon and enchanted to me! All lamps are wonderful! All rings are talismans! Yes, on every object that I recognize among the upper branches of my Christmas tree I see this fairy light!

But hark! the Waits are playing, and they break my childish sleep! What images do I associate with the Christmas music as I see them set forth on the Christmas tree! Known before all the others, keeping far apart from all the others, they gather round my little bed. An angel, speaking to a group of shepherds in a field; some travelers, with eyes uplifted, following a star; a baby in a manger; a child in a spacious temple, talking with grave men; a solemn figure with a mild and beautiful face, raising a dead girl by the hand; again, near a city gate, calling back the son of a widow on his bier, to life; a crowd of people looking through the opened roof of a chamber where he sits, and letting down a sick person on a bed, with ropes; the same, in a tempest, walking on the waters; in a ship, again on a sea-shore, teaching a great multitude; again, with a child upon his knees, and other childre around; again, restoring sight to the blind, speec to the dumb, hearing to the deaf, health to th sick, strength to the lame, knowledge to th ignorant; again, dying upon a cross, watched b armed soldiers, a darkness coming on, the eart beginning to shake, and only one voice hear "Forgive them, for they know not what the do!"

Encircled by the social thoughts of Christma time, still let the benignant figure of my chil hood stand unchanged! In every cheerful imag and suggestion that the season brings, may th bright star that rested above the poor roof be th star of all the Christian world!

A moment's pause, O vanishing tree, of whic the lower boughs are dark to me yet, and let m look once more. I know there are blank space on thy branches, where eyes that I have love have shone and smiled, from which they are de parted. But, far above, I see the Raiser of th dead girl and the widow's son,—and God is gooc —*Charles Dickens.*

THE CHEERFUL LETTER EXCHANGE

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